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SUBJECT: ROK-JAPAN-PRC TRILATERAL BARELY MENTIONS DPRK

REF: A. TOKYO 2532
[1](#)B. BEIJING 3770

Classified By: A/POL Brian D. McFeeters. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The June 3 trilateral foreign ministers' meeting focused on efforts to increase trilateral economic and civic cooperation, but glossed over security issues in Northeast Asia (including North Korea) and other regions, MOFAT contacts told poloffs on June 5. The host-ROK agenda had planned on 90 minutes of talks on three issues (trilateral cooperation, NEA and DPRK, and other regions such as the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia), but the delegations spent all but 10 minutes on the first issue, with Japan emphasizing the importance of addressing climate change and China explaining its position on carbon emissions. The North Korea discussion consisted of each side noting the importance of implementing the February 13 agreement and resolving the Banco Delta Asia issue as soon as possible. MOFAT Director-General for Nuclear Affairs Lim Sung-nam opined that ROK FM Song Min-soon had good chemistry with his Japanese counterpart, but Chinese FM Yang appeared overly timid in his first meeting of the three ministers together.
END SUMMARY.

NEA TRILATERAL FOR NORTHEAST ASIANS

[1](#)2. (C) On June 5, MOFAT's Northeast Asia Division I (Japan) Deputy Director Lee Ho-shik, who was the ROK coordinator for the trilateral, told poloffs that the ROK objective in hosting the June 3 talks on Jeju Island between ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi was to promote cooperation and to encourage a channel for tripartite dialogue separate from the ASEAN PLUS Three summit framework. Japan, Lee said, had expressed a willingness to hold a similar NEA FM trilateral in 2008, with the tentative plan that China would host in 2009.

[1](#)3. (C) Lee explained that the last four ROK-Japan-PRC foreign ministers' meetings came under the name the Trilateral Summit Committee and prepared for the ASEAN Plus Three summits (June 2004, on the sidelines of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Qingdao, China; November 2004, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Plus Three; May 2005, on the sidelines of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Kyoto, Japan; and, January 2007, on the sidelines of ASEAN Plus Three in Cebu, Philippines). During the meeting in Cebu, ROK FM Song proposed holding a different kind of trilateral format.

While the June 3 meeting preceded the June 4-5 ACD in Seoul, the location and timing was separate enough that the ROKG assessed it as "substantially meaningful." The three foreign ministers would probably meet in November 2007 on the sidelines of ASEAN Plus Three in Singapore, but it was not clear whether this meeting would again be under the Trilateral Summit Committee mantle.

AGENDA

14. (C) Lee reflected that June 3 agenda did not allow enough time to cover a broad agenda in significant detail. The ROK schedule had planned on thirty-minute discussions (with simultaneous interpretation) on three topics: trilateral cooperation; Northeast Asia including North Korea; and, other regional and international issues in the Middle East, Africa, and Central America. However, the delegations spent some 80 of the 90 allotted minutes on the first issue, with Japan emphasizing the importance of addressing climate change and China explaining its position on carbon emissions. Result from the first agenda item included agreement to:

--accelerate negotiations on a Trilateral Investment Agreement;

--assess and follow-up on the results of private sector studies on a Korea-Japan-China Free Trade Agreement (Lee said that an academic study is being led by the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy; the National Institute for Research Advancement (Japan), and their PRC counterpart. A private business study is being led by the Federation of Korean Industries, the Nippon Keidanren, and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade);

--strengthen energy security talks and develop trilateral cooperation;

--endeavor to launch airport shuttles from the Seoul's Kimpo to Tokyo's Haneda airports, as well as between Haneda and Shanghai's Hongqiao airports;

--strengthen cooperation in environmental matters such as Chinese sandstorms and marine refuse;

--promote clean and alternative energy measures;

--expand youth and sports exchanges;

--enhance people-to-people and journalist exchanges;

--resume exchanges among foreign affairs think tanks.

PLATITUDES ON NORTH KOREA

15. (C) After the first agenda item was completed, only 10 minutes remained to discuss North Korea and the remaining topics, Lee said. Conversation was limited to each side noting the importance of implementing the February 13 "Initial Actions" agreement and resolving the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) issue as soon as possible. In a separate June 5 meeting, MOFAT Director-General for Nuclear Affairs and Deputy Head of the ROK Six-Party Talks delegation Lim Sung-nam confirmed to POL M/C that neither the trilateral meeting nor the ROK's 30-minute bilateral meetings (consecutive interpretation) with Japan and China went beyond urging China to play a bigger role in resolve the BDA issue. Chinese officials responded that Washington needed to provide a good solution to the problem, Lim said.

16. (C) Following discussions on North Korea, there was only time to note the importance of trilateral cooperation in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, Lee said.

ATMOSPHERICS

17. (C) Deputy Director Lee said it was productive for the three sides to assemble and concentrate on areas of commonality, even for a short time, but efforts to formalize a trilateral foreign ministers' meeting were still at the early stage. Director-General Lim, who attended the trilateral meeting plus the ROK's bilaterals with Japan and China, expressed his impression that ROK FM Song and Japanese FM Aso had good chemistry together, but that Chinese FM Yang appeared overly timid and cautious. Perhaps this was because it was his first time meeting his ROK and Japanese counterparts in such a forum, but Yang would not even agree on a venue or a date for the next trilateral FM meeting.

STANTON